

# The Uses and Misuses of Foucault for Thinking Management: A Case for a Theory of Managerial Governmentality

Thibault Le Texier ([letexier\\_t \(AT\) yahoo.fr](mailto:letexier_t(AT)yahoo.fr))

GREDEG-CNRS (Law, Economics and Management Research Group), Nice University

February 2012

## *Abstract*

From the beginning of the 1970s, Michel Foucault works on power. Repressing, ruling, dominating: the discipline, his first developed conception of power, is an essentially negative mechanism. By the mid-70s, Foucault strives to escape the binary and overbearing conception of power he inherited from the theories of sovereignty. He thus balances and nuances this understanding. The power then no longer takes the shape of the prison panopticon, but that of the government – in the narrow sense of State activity, and in the broad sense of a behavioural technology applied to free individuals. Yet, until his death, he remains encumbered by this regal rationality whose influence on the contemporary understanding of power he continues to criticize. Among the main notions he elaborates to cut off the king's head, the concept of governmentality stands as the most drawn upon today. It is time for management thinkers and historians to seize it and develop a thorough theory of the managerial governmentality, rather than simply focus on the panopticon, subjectivation processes and the power/knowledge paradigm. Far from using the Foucault tool-box as an intellectual straitjacket, management students should use it as a liberating set of sketches to be questioned, complemented, and diverted if necessary.

*Key-words:* Foucault, discipline, governmentality, management

## *Introduction: Foucault on Power*

After having written a history of madness, a history of the medical outlook and a history of sciences, in the 1970s Foucault begins to question power. It is this Foucault who will be studied here, the Foucault of the disciplines, of biopower and of governmentality.

Foucault's analyses of power share a great continuity in their method and intentions with significant curves in their conceptualization, breaks in their objects of study and reinterpretation of their paradigms. Unlike his other main themes of research (madness and medicine, discourse and knowledge, prison and discipline, sexuality and subjectivity), his investigations on biopower and governmentality have not taken the form of a book while he was alive – and thus have been the object of far less interviews and discussions than his published works. Admittedly, *The Will to Knowledge* (1978) is a book about power; but it is made of hypotheses more than conclusions and of declarations of principles rather than demonstrations. It announces a programme, it does not propose a synthesis. The Collège de France lectures which follow it, in spite of their undeniable richness and coherence, remain highly impressionistic.

Foucault's works do not propose a unified theory of power but several matrices: in the first half of the 70s, the author privileges the dyad *domination-discipline*. From 1975 to 1976, he briefly turns this slightly binary and negative understanding of power into the triptych *power-law-truth*. Then, from 1976 to 1978, he explores the *medicine-population-norm* triangle. In 1978 and 1979, he sets this paradigm aside to focus on the series *government-population-economy*. The last five years of his life, he works on the *government-truth-subjectivity* scheme. Of course, these different matrices rather than follow one another in succession, tend to overlap and intersect. They also serve, in a very strategic way, the various concrete problems that Foucault addressed as a “specific intellectual.” These schemes also corresponded, in his thought, to certain historical eras.

Limiting ourselves to the last three centuries, we can distinguish, following Foucault, three principal mechanisms of government: sovereignty, discipline, and security. Simply stated, sovereignty, which prevailed in Europe from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century, consisted of laying down a law and imposing a sanction in response to its infraction. Discipline, which gained importance in the eighteenth century, complemented the law with a set of correctional and surveillance processes. Security, a paradigm which also took shape in

the eighteenth century, consisted of contextualizing a deviance from the norm within a series of probable events and the reaction to this deviance within a calculus of costs. The procedure for setting an optimal average and acceptable limits thus replaced the binary distinction between what was permitted and what was forbidden.

In conceptualizing the notion of discipline, Foucault aims at escaping the theories of sovereignty and the juridical understandings of power. With the concept of “governmentality,” he furthers his critique of the state rationality and softens the essentially negative view of power implied by his disciplinary approach. He does so with an often limited success. For Foucault never fully manages to escape the repressive views of power he continually criticizes from 1976. In spite of many declarations, he never cuts off the king’s head. And though he studies the asylum, the clinic, the prison, and the state in great detail, he never fully analyses the business enterprise. For these reasons, Foucault’s conceptual tools must be used with great care if they are to be applied to management.

The notion of discipline in particular seems unfit for the conceptualization of management. From Taylor to Mintzberg, management has been thought of as a rejection of discipline. The notion of governmentality seems more applicable to the question of managerial rationality. Yet, this concept more a sketch than a fully realised tool.

### *Disciplining*

As Foucault theorizes it retrospectively from the beginning of the 70s, the movement of 68 and fascism and Stalinism forced intellectuals to question power (Foucault 1976 and 1977). Power constitutes, from this point forward, a privileged object of his research.

His initial reflections on power occur while he is studying the French “penal system” since the Middle Ages. Rapidly, he focuses on the “penitential system” and moves away from the juridical arrangements to analyse punishing arrangements. He does so from a very concrete position: the launch of the Prison Information Group, within which he holds a central role. Power is now the force he saw counteracting the 1968 student revolts in Tunisia and which he sees crushing the prisoners; a power which “dominates, appears suddenly, threatens, crushes” (Foucault 1973: 402), which locks up, represses, clubs, spies, punishes, deprives, watches over, and silences.

From his study of the punishment mechanisms elaborated and used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Foucault forges his notion of “discipline.” He strives to show that it initially stems from a specific institution, the army, and is then incorporated into two others, the police and more importantly the prison. The latter becomes to him the “concentrated and austere figure of all the disciplines” (Foucault 1975: 255), the panopticon embodying the archetypal disciplinary mechanism.

Foucault theorizes on the concept of discipline in order to render the classical approach to power proposed by the theories of sovereignty more complex. As he puts it in his 1976 lecture at the Collège de France, “a right of sovereignty and a mechanics of discipline. It is, I think, between these two limits that power is exercised” (Foucault 1997: 37). This notion of discipline offers him the opportunity to theorize on a non juridical, non united and diffuse power, which cannot be assigned to a single institution or device. But he realizes as early as 1975 that this conception of power remains too negative. “We must cease once and for all, Foucault seems to tell himself in *Discipline and Punish*, to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’” (Foucault 1975: 194). Unfortunately, even when he envisions power under the more positive concept of “production,” Foucault never ceases to describe its effects in negative terms and to bring it back to the State.

### *Cutting off half of the king’s head*

The concept of “governmentality” constitutes another attempt to escape the sovereign view of power. In the lectures he gives at the beginning of 1978, Foucault employs the notion of “governmentality,” which rapidly becomes the new concept with which he questions power once again (Foucault 2007: 144). The government, this mode of exercising power “neither warlike nor juridical” (Foucault 1982: 221), must allow him to move further away from the state paradigm – a paradigm he will never fully get rid of.

This notion of governmentality remains meandering in Foucault’s work – which might explain its considerable academic success. From its first known use (Foucault 2007: 144), this term had three different meanings. Each of these meanings refers, in one way or another, to the art of government elaborated with regard to Western states from the eighteenth century. Foucault uses this notion in order to elaborate a genealogy of Western political rationality,

which takes shape from the eighteenth century in relation to the State (Foucault 1979: 254). Indeed, this concept of governmentality remains hitherto mostly used to refer to phenomena with regard to the State and public administration (Rose and Miller 1992; Barry, Osborne and Rose 1996; O'Malley, Weir and Shearing 1997; Dean 1999; Fraser 2003; Lascoumes 2004; Berns 2005; Hindess 2005; Lemke 2011). The impressive success of the notion of *governance* in the field of political science has certainly influenced the growing use of the notion of governmentality in such disciplines as criminology, policy making, educational studies, postcolonial theory, cultural history, and medical anthropology.

In the lectures he gives between 1977 and 1979, Foucault moves away from the essentially disciplinary and state representation of power he has elaborated for a decade. He thus criticizes the “overvaluation” of the problem of the state (Foucault 2007 : 144). From this time, he applies the concept of “government” to realities such as the family, the house, the community of Christians, the enterprise, and the self. In this perspective, the government is “a technology of human behavior” (Foucault 2008: 260), an “action upon actions” whose result is “to structure the possible field of action of others” (Foucault 1982: 220-221). He then uses the notion of “government” in “the very broad meaning which it had in the sixteenth century” (*Ibid*: 221).

In 1982, Foucault defines governmentality anew as “contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self” (Foucault 1988a: 19). In his analysis of the government of the self, he similarly discusses a “governmentality understood as a strategic field of power relations in the broadest sense and not merely political sense of the term, (...) in their mobility, transformability, and reversability” (Foucault 2005: 241). And two years later he adds: “I intend this concept of governmentality to cover the whole range of practices that constitute, define, organize and instrumentalise the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other” (Foucault 1984: 300). If the first definitions of the term seem restrictive, the last are, on the contrary, extremely inclusive. An explanation of this ambiguity would be that Foucault moulds this notion at a time when he is thinking less in terms of population, state and economy, and more in terms of ethics, truth and subjectivity.

The state is not the only mechanism that produces subjects; the state does not create power but recovers and reuses pre-existing power relationships. “The state is only an episode in government, (...) an episode in governmentality,” as he puts it in 1978 (Foucault 2007: 325). The government subsumes the state as much as discipline subsumes the penal system, as

segregation subsumes psychiatry, as biopolitics subsumes medical institutions, and subjectivation subsumes sexuality. Beyond the pastorate and state rationality, it is possible to identify other governmentalities. To accomplish such a task would not do injustice to Foucault's work, quite the contrary.

Yet, though they use the notion of "governance;" and multiply expressions such as "the management of populations," "the production of the individual," or the "control of society;" and though they are specialists in management, none of Foucault's commentators have, to my knowledge, questioned management as a governmentality.

### *Foucault, thinker of market rationality*

Foucault never directly studies capitalism and does not grant it a very specific place in his analysis. On the contrary, in the lectures he gives at the Collège de France in 1978 and 1979, he looks closely at the way the economic logic was used by liberals to reinterpret state rationality from the eighteenth century to the twentieth century. In this perspective, he studies at length the final primary incarnations of liberalism: ordoliberalism and neoliberalism.

Within the ordoliberal framework, power is not applied to a legal person but to a *homo oeconomicus*. The Ordoliberals' goal is to ground the state in the market. The state is the institution on which they focus. According to this scheme of thought, which Foucault follows, it is the state which favours the spread of market arrangements within society in order to ease economic coordination, to legitimize itself, and to foster national economic growth. The proper functioning of markets requires the permanent intervention of the government not in the market but in society itself. The state must also guarantee the rule of law, without which the economic game cannot be properly played.

If the result of such a policy is "not a supermarket society, but an enterprise society," it is only in the sense that a society made of enterprises is the best fitted to market regulation (Foucault 2008: 147). The enterprise is considered here from the exterior, as an agent acting within markets, and not as an institution carrying a governmental rationality of its own. It does not matter, in a way, to know how these enterprises are managed, as long as they infuse society with the spirit of entrepreneurship and the principle of market competition.

The principle of intelligibility in the ordoliberal theory is not the business enterprise, it is the market. Ordoliberals have not theorized on the business enterprise nor on management.

Much like Classical economists, they remain at the door of the enterprise. Their ideal corporation is the small family firm. Their *homo œconomicus* is not a manager, he is an owner-entrepreneur. Lastly, Ordoliberalism strives to keep the values associated to market competition within the boundaries of the economic realm. For them, morality is to be guaranteed by the state and not by the business enterprise. The American neoliberals take this concept much further and apply market and enterprise rationalities to all of society.

### *Foucault on liberalism and the business enterprise*

Foucault never took the business enterprise as a field of study. Though he uses the notion of “management” (*gestion*) to discuss some aspects of power, it is synonymous with “government” and he never precisely defines this concept. When he applies the model of the jail to the early factory, he questions twentieth century economic rationality with the same concepts he used to question eighteenth century economic rationality. To him, neither Taylorism or Fordism affected the functioning of the business enterprise.

Foucault explicitly discusses a “neoliberal governmentality” (Peters 2006) which could revolve around the business enterprise rather than around the state or the market. But to him, it refers more to the government of the self than to the government of others. Instead of further questioning the nature and logic of this new governmentality in the rest of his 1978-1979 lectures, he focuses on the eighteenth century and returns to his study of the state. He ultimately denies the existence of another governmentality, which would not be institutionalized under a state form, which would not function under a unitary sovereign, which would not be discussed primarily in legal terms, which would not be exercised principally over a territory, and which would reject discipline. Yet such a governmentality exists. We propose to call it the *managerial governmentality*.

If it is true, as Foucault asserts, that “economic science cannot be the science of government and economics cannot be the internal principle, law, rule of conduct, or rationality of government,” (Foucault 2008: 286) it would seem that management can constitute such a rationality of government. Such an hypothesis does not seem to have interested Foucault. His friends Paul Veyne and Gilles Deleuze noticed the possibility of such a governmentality but have not theorized on it. Veyne notes for instance that, in matters of government, “other practices are possible, for example ‘great enterprises’” (Veyne 1978:

150). Deleuze draws an inexact portrait of managerial governmentality. Characterized by the power of money and debt, in the hands of the banking sector, its scope is limited to control (Deleuze 1990). A control vaguely defined as “open and continuous” much different from the “recent closed disciplines” (Deleuze 1989 p.191). Deleuze thus ignores the functions of organization and of knowledge which characterize managerial rationality, together with the principle of efficiency which forms its core.

### *The uses of Foucault by management thinkers and historians*

Foucault and management studies met only after the death of the former. Foucault’s works have been used by management thinkers and historians since the mid-80s and in organization studies at the end of that decade (Cooper and Burrell 1988; Clegg 1989; McKinlay and Starkey 1998a). Rather than adapting the tools forged by Foucault while he was questioning the state, the prison and the clinic, management thinkers and historians have adopted them often without modification. On the whole, management students have not used Foucault’s works to question their schemes of thought, as psychiatrists did with his *History of Insanity*.

Following a well-established Marxist theory, Foucault has been widely used to bring to light the domination of capital over work (Clegg 1989). Far from presenting a rationality of its own, management is then pictured as entirely submitted to the capitalist logic. Others have used Foucault to question the “neutrality” of management techniques, instruments and arrangements (Barratt 2004; Pezet 2004). Foucault’s tool-box is also applied to subject formation processes within the business enterprise (Knights and Willmott 1989). The knowledge/power scheme of thought has been extensively used in critical studies in accounting from the mid-80s (Miller and O’Leary 1987; Hopwood and Miller, 1994; Armstrong 1994). Since then, this paradigm has been used by management and organization studies in general (Mumby and Deetz 1990; Jacques 1999). These trends share the common assumption that power is domination. Nevertheless, Foucault imagined another kind of power, not disciplinary but governmental.

Foucault’ lectures at the Collège de France on government and liberalism were partially published in English as early as 1979 (Foucault 1979). His research on government was also presented in a conference at Stanford in 1979 and published in 1981 (Foucault 1981), in a book chapter published in 1982 by H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow (Foucault 1982) and in two



conferences at the Vermont university published in 1988 (Foucault 1988a and 1988b; cf. Meyet and Ribemont 2005). Since then, these thoughts on government and governmentality have been widely used and commented upon (Bröckling, Krasmann and Lemke 2011: 9-10). Even if one of the editors of the book which made the notion of “governmentality” popular among Anglo-saxon scholars was a professor of management (Burchell, Gordon and Miller 1991), management thinkers lent importance to this concept only in the 2000s. And still, it is the Foucault of *Discipline and Punish*, of the power-knowledge issue, of the panopticon and of state rationality who remains the most frequently read and discussed by management thinkers, and to a lesser degree the Foucault of the technologies of the self (Alvesson and Willmott 2003; Välikangas and Seeck 2011). Far from theorizing a governmental rationality unique to management, most of these analysts apply barely adjusted schemes of thought proper to discipline and state rationality.

Hitherto, Foucault works have been used in the field of management principally by critical studies in organization aiming at shedding light on the disciplinary aspect of business enterprises (Dixon 2007; Carter, McKinlay and Rowlinson 2002: 517). One of the first authors to use Foucault in organization studies, Burrell considered *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* to be Foucault’s most relevant work in this field of study (Burrell 1988: 225). As confirms another leading representative of this trend, “Anglo-Saxon critical studies will find a significant argument in the Foucault of the panopticon” (Starkey 2005: 45). The “corporate panopticon” was to constitute a typical example of a disciplinary society (Preston 1989; McKinlay and Starkey 1998a: 3; 1998b: 113-116; 1998c: 238; cf. also Covalleski, Dirsmith, Heian and Samuel 1998; Jacobs and Heracleous 2001; McKinlay 2006). At best, from state rationality to management rationality, we would pass from totalitarian centralized power to totalitarian diffused power (Leflaive 1996; Casey 2002: 17). At worst, the exact same logic would be at work within the two realms. As stated by McKinlay, Carter and Pezet in a paper studying the relevance of using the notion of “governmentality” in management studies, “all institutions, including corporations, are subject to the same dynamics as the state” (McKinlay, Carter and Pezet 2012: 8). Rather than use the notion of governmentality to identify a governmental rationality unique to management, these authors regrettably use it to pin state governmentality against managerial practices.

For even when this very notion of governmentality is used by management thinkers, it is still to question management as a set of devices made of the usual “power/knowledge” phenomena, subjectification processes and other “technologies of power,” rather than a governmentality of its own (Townley 1994; Clegg, Pitsis, Rura-Polley and Marosszeky 2002). Clegg, Courpasson and Phillips (2006: 239 and 264) even discuss “technologies of governmentality,” which is inappropriate given that each governmentality functions through different sets of technologies. On the contrary, the concept of technical governmentality is certainly promising.

Furthermore, as we have seen, the notion of governmentality assumes a different meaning depending on the conceptual matrix within which it is used, whether it is to question eighteenth century State rationality or a kind of “conduct of conduct” (Foucault 1982: 221). It is unfortunate that most organization and management students use this concept without specifying which general conceptual framework is favoured.

Even authors who distinguish the notion of governmentality from state rationality and recognize the productive aspects of power often fail to grasp management as a genuine governmental rationality. Many rather focus on specific aspects of it, such as accounting, control, strategy and human resource management (Rose and Miller 1992; Boyce and Davids 2004; Dixon 2007; Seeck and Kantola 2009; McKinlay, Carter, Pezet and Clegg 2010; Weiskopf and Munro 2011), or on related subjects such as the “governmental rationality of marketing” (Skålén, Fellesson and Fougère 2006). To put it simply, leading authors such as Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose have used the term “governmentality” primarily to assert that the state is no longer the central point of the economic and political life and that new technologies have turned the world into a knowledgeable object of action (Miller and Rose 2008). On the whole, in spite of their quality, most of these researches have loosely used the concept of governmentality to analyse practical cases studies. It should be possible to give a more abstract look at management and to picture it as a governmentality.

Of course, discipline has not disappeared from factories with the advent of scientific management (McKinlay and Wilson, forthcoming); but we should not ignore that management thinkers have shaped managerial rationality against disciplinary logic. Marshall Kirkman, one of the leading thinkers in railway administration, explicitly rejects the methods of “the autocratic manager of earlier days” (Kirkman, 1894: 174). Scientific management is built on the rejection of military discipline. Taylor’s friend Henry Gantt explains to his fellow

engineers in the middle of the First World War that they must “develop a task system on the basis of democracy that will yield as good, or better, results than those now in operation under autocracy” (Gantt 1916 : 53, underlined in the original). What most of them were seeking was continuous control and individual commitment, rather than punishments. The fact that workmen smoke, or are tired, or talk, all these activities are taken into account by modern managers not in a disciplinary way but in terms of organization, control, knowledge and efficiency. Discipline has not disappeared from factories and offices with the advent of modern management methods and thinking. Taylor himself admits that “some method of disciplining the men is unfortunately a necessary element of all systems of management” (Taylor 1903: 195). But he adds a decade later that “under scientific management the discipline is at the very minimum” (Taylor 1912: 586).

Such is the strange image given by a majority of Foucauldian analysts of management: rather than using the late Foucault studies conducted around the business enterprise, or at least those available in English since 1979 on governmentality, which would seem quite natural for researchers on the government of enterprises, they favoured the disciplinary paradigm which Foucault himself attacked as soon as *Discipline and Punish* was printed. By doing so, they seem to have used the most available tools, but not the most appropriate.

### *Contribution to a theory of managerial governmentality*

At the end of the twentieth century, in industrialized countries, the institution which can recruit individuals, take care of them, tap information from them, educate them, watch over them, punish them, protect them, rate them, reward them, act upon their imagination or influence their desires, such an institution is the business enterprise at least as much as it is the state. Today, the great subjectivizing forces are management and marketing much more than public administration, law and police (Miller and Rose 2008). And the normalizing of behaviours is less a religious, juridical or medical matter than a question of production, consumption and management.

Management is not state administration, it is not discipline, it is not religious authority, nor is it the logic of the market; even if it draws from these ways of thinking, it is a genuine way of conceiving power and society. Thus it asks for a specific understanding articulated around its own principles: not sovereignty, security, territory, population, or justice; not truth, faith,

or salvation; not interest, profit, property, investment, or capital; but *efficiency, organization, control, and knowledge*.

Efficiency is the first cardinal principle of managerial governmentality, “the basic 'good'” as a foremost thinker of management puts it (Gulick 1937: 192). In this perspective, words, objects and people are essentially the producers of effects. The American engineers of the early twentieth century apply the principles they have developed in the imagining and the handling of machines to employees; but to them the machine is less a paradigm or an archetype than a metaphor of exactness and efficiency. As such, if the managerial logic draws from the instrumental rationality, it cannot be reduced to this logic.

Throughout the twentieth century, this principle of efficiency comes to supersede formerly praised principles of honesty, seniority, carefulness, and loyalty, which were fostered by the religious, familial and state institutions prevalent in the past. Efficiency is thus one of the primary intellectual tool of managers, but also of historians of management. Chandler seeks for instance to show that the business corporation came to replace market mechanisms and small undertakings because it was more efficient (Chandler 1977: 6-7). By doing so, he overlooks the fact that efficiency was not a socially esteemed principle at that time. For it is not more rational for a human being to value efficiency than to praise freedom, democracy or profit. On the contrary, it is possible to assert that the business enterprise came to supersede market mechanisms and small undertakings from the point at which the principle of efficiency gained importance within American society.

Secondly, from the early days of systematic and scientific management, managing consisted essentially of organization. This principle of organization has been theorized upon by industrial managers against the fixed view of the rural worker, land owner and patriarchal boss. According to this revolutionary understanding, beings, signs and artefacts are infinitely malleable. Organizing consists of the incorporation of preformed schemes into spaces, tools, bodies, rules, processes, behaviours, symbols, institutions and minds in order to produce efficiently and almost automatically expected results. A more or less stable formal organization is one of the main results of such an action. Differently stated, organizing means arranging and formalizing materials, symbols, individuals, and groups in order to construct a society. The literature on business management stands, in a large part, as a reflection on the enterprise as an institutionalized and normalized set of governing processes. It reinforces a technical view of institutions as controlled incorporations of techniques, representations and

social routines. Ergonomics and design are, in this perspective, the direct heirs of managerial governmentality.

Control, the third fulcrum of managerial governmentality, is neither command nor discipline. It is conceptualized by twentieth century management thinkers as an explicit rejection of these forms of the exercise of power. Management is a conjuration of conflict, in the sense that arbitration, mediation and negotiation are always preferable to the use of physical force. Management practices do not rest on obedience, discipline and legal proscription, as military and state action do, but rather on influence, leadership and prescription. In this perspective, governing is not about dominating and reacting to correct the trespassing of law, but about a constant conditioning of every kind of behaviour. Controlling is not watching over, disciplining and punishing; it is rather normalizing, arranging and training. It is not about submitting people to the will of one man, but about complying behaviours to objectivised standards. In instances of fault, punishment takes the form of dismissal, exclusion and relegation, and not of imprisonment and corporeal castigation. Controlling is an individualizing practice but it rests on mechanisms detached from individuals and physical properties. The managerial governmentality also rests on the active participation of the governed in their own government. The ultimate stage of control is self-control. From the 1920s, the principle of leadership subsumes this way of governing through motivating, encouraging, seducing, and inspiring.

Lastly, management rests on mechanisms of accumulation, organization and application of knowledge. In other words, there can be no management without knowledge management. This practice has three main components. Initially, knowledge management is about measuring, collecting, and recording. Accounting, statistics and communication were considered by the early thinkers of industrial management to be simple tools for the recollection, transformation and circulation of information in order to enhance control, organization and efficiency within the work processes. The second major dimension of managerial knowledge is about standardizing and planning. Management practices cannot exist without the generalised use of formalised knowledge, and notably of written documents. The third dimension of managerial knowledge consists of the moral and technical training of malleable individuals. As an early thinker of accounting stated, “knowledge is power, and . . . absence of knowledge is weakness” (Church 1908: 10). As such, managers have always built their identity upon the image of the intellectual worker, as opposed to the manual worker. At

the beginning of the twentieth century, this use of knowledge as an instrument of legitimization was largely revolutionary within the industrial sector.

These four dimensions are strongly linked and form a coherent whole which cannot be limited to a loose set of technologies, discourses, and practices. Management constitutes a governmental rationality of its own. A modern manager might still draw on state rationality, pastorate, military thinking or family methods of governing. Yet, from the days of scientific management, this managerial governmentality progressively took shape. Authors such as Taylor and his followers took care to distinguish their methods from military and family practices, promoting the principles of efficiency, organization, control and knowledge in lieu of those of loyalty, seniority, discipline, and morality. Of course, such principles have not disappeared from management discourses and still influence management practices, but they are the relics of other governmentalities and are not characteristic of managerial governmentality.

### *Conclusion: a call for a theory of managerial governmentality*

In a way, one could argue that the business corporation has just adopted pre-existing technologies of discipline and control. The manager would thus be the direct descendent of the pastor, the sovereign, the jurist, the military chief, the teacher and the doctor. At best, the manager rearranged the governmental armoury developed through the classical age. But fundamentally, he has not invented anything.

Indeed, each new governmentality seems to necessarily adapt to the cultural heritage and historical conditions within which it grows. The managerial governmentality nevertheless constitutes a qualitative leap from the pastoral, patriarchal and state governmentalities. Similarly, the managerial governmentality cannot be assimilated into capitalist and instrumental rationalities – the question regarding the possibility of considering these two logics as proper governmentalities remains to be answered.

Of course, this paper will not have the claim to propose a full theory of managerial governmentality, which deserves further exploration for at least four other reasons. Firstly, it can renew the traditional understandings of power and government. The general schemes of thought used in the 20th century to apprehend power, whether they are inspired by Marx, Weber, the Frankfurt School or Foucault, focus on certain types of domination, which are

mainly state-owned, military, disciplinary, legal, physical, capitalist, and technical. In particular, power is predominantly understood under the categories of capital, technology, property or sovereignty.

Secondly, such an analysis of managerial governmentality is important because it has largely surpassed the business enterprise and was applied to public administration, municipalities, the army, university, school, hospital, police, home, NGO, individual and to the church. Therefore, this governmentality shapes an increasing number of dimensions of our existence, the more we use business enterprise to give birth to our children and raise them, to take care of our elders and our disabled and to bury our dead, to construct and maintain our buildings, to feed, dress, express, heal and entertain ourselves, to travel, communicate, learn and to love.

Thirdly, while this managerial governmentality is applied to the bulk of human activities, management is still widely regarded to be a loose and neutral set of technical arrangements, best practices and universal recipes the adoption of which is a matter of common sense and a guarantee of efficiency. Histories and theories of management, far from questioning the origins, evolutions, and mechanisms of this governmentality, reveal a largely hagiographic and instrumental discourse.

Fourthly, because we need to be more aware of the magnitude of managerial power. Five centuries of state activity have forged among Western people, often with great suffering, a sensitivity to the excess of state power – and this sensitivity is precious, for democracy is never acquired infinitely. Thanks to the works of Marx, among others, we have become aware of the domination a business enterprise can exert on its lowest ranking members, and of the intrinsic impulses of market forces. Perhaps it is time to raise awareness about the logic of the managerial powers which infuse our societies.

### *Bibliography*

- ALVESSON M. and WILLMOTT H. (Ed.). 2003. *Studying Management Critically*. London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.; New Delhi: Sage
- ARMSTRONG P. 1994. “The Influence of Michel Foucault on Accounting Research”, *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 5(1): 25-56
- BARRATT E. 2004. “Foucault and the Politics of Critical Management Studies.” *Culture & Organization* 10(3): 191-202

- BARRY A., OSBORNE T., ROSE N. 1996. *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism, and Rationalities of Government*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- BERNS T. 2005. *Souveraineté, droit et gouvernementalité. Lectures du politique à partir de Bodin*. Paris: Léo Scheer
- BRÖCKLING U., KRASMANN S. and LEMKE T. 2001. "From Foucault's Lectures at the Collège de France to Studies of Governmentality: An Introduction." In BRÖCKLING U., KRASMANN S. and LEMKE T. (Ed.), *Governmentality: Current Issues and Future Challenges*, New York; London: Routledge, pp.1-33
- BOYCE G. and DAVIDS C. 2004. "The Dimensions of Governmentality Studies in Accounting: Complementary and Critical Potentials." In PARKER L. and LOW A. M. (Ed.). *Collected Papers of APIRA 2004*, Singapore: Singapore Management University and APIRA. 39 pp.
- BURCHELL G., GORDON C., MILLER P. (Ed.). 1991. *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality. With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf
- BURRELL G. 1988. "Modernism, Post Modernism and Organizational Analysis 2: The Contribution of Michel Foucault." *Organization Studies* 9(2): 221-235
- CARTER C. MCKINLAY A. and ROWLINSON M. 2002. "Introduction: Foucault, Management and History." *Organization* 9(4): 515-526
- CASEY C. 2002. *Critical Analysis of Organizations: Theory, Practice, Revitalization*. London; Thousand Oaks; New Delhi: Sage
- CHANDLER A. 1977. *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- CHURCH A. 1908. *The Proper Distribution of Expense Burden*. New York: The Engineering Magazine
- CLEGG S. 1989. *Frameworks of Power*. London: Sage
- CLEGG S., PITSIS T., RURA-POLLEY T. and MAROSSZEKY M. 2002. "Governmentality Matters: Designing an Alliance Culture of Inter-Organizational Collaboration for Managing Projects." *Organization Studies* 23: 317-337
- CLEGG S., COURPASSON D. and PHILLIPS N. 2006. *Power and Organizations*. London: Sage
- COOPER R. and BURRELL G. 1988. "Modernism, Postmodernism and Organizational Analysis 2: The Contribution of Michel Foucault." *Organization Studies* 9 (2): 221-235
- COVALESKI M., DIRSMITH M., HEIAN J. and SAMUEL S. 1998. "The Calculated and the Avowed: Techniques of Discipline and Struggles Over Identity in Big Six Public Accounting Firms." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 43(2): 293-327
- DEAN M. 1999. *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*. London: Sage
- DELEUZE G. 1989. « Qu'est-ce qu'un dispositif ? » In ASSOCIATION POUR LE CENTRE MICHEL FOUCAULT, *Michel Foucault philosophe : rencontre internationale, Paris, 9, 10, 11 janvier 1988*. Paris: Seuil. 185-195
- 1992 [1990]. "Postscript on the Societies of Control." *October* 59: 3-7
- DIXON M. 2007. "Transforming Power: Expanding the Inheritance of Michel Foucault in Organizational Studies." *Management Communication Quarterly* 20(3): 283-296
- FOUCAULT M. 1971. "A Conversation with Michel Foucault." Interview with J. Simon. *Partisan Review*, 38(2): 192-201



- 1973. « La force de fuir ». *Derrière le miroir* 202. In FOUCAULT M., 1994, *Dits et écrits : 1954-1988*, t. II, 1970-1975, sous la dir. de D. Defert et F. Ewald, avec la collab. de J. Lagrange. Paris: Gallimard. 401-405.
- 1975. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by A. Sheridan. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. 1991
- 1976. “Two Lectures.” In Foucault M. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Edited and translated by C. Gordon. Harlow: Pearson Education: Longman. 78-108
- 1977. “Intervista a Michel Foucault.” Interview with A. Fontana and P. Pasquino in FONTANA A. and PASQUINO P. (Ed.). 1977. *Microfisica del Potere. Interventi Politici*, Torino: Einaudi. 3-28
- 1978. *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1: An Introduction*. Translated by R. Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books
- 1979. “Governmentality.” *Ideology & Consciousness* 6: 5-21
- 1981. “*Omnes et Singulatim*: Towards a Criticism of ‘Political Reason’”, in MCMURRIN S. (Ed.), *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, t.II, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press: 223-254
- 1982. “Afterword: The Subject and Power.” In DREYFUS H. and RABINOW P., *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 208-226
- 1984. “The Ethics of the Concern for the Self as a Practice of Freedom.” In FOUCAULT M. 1997. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth, The Essential Works I*. Edited by P. Rabinow. London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press: 281-301
- 1988a. “Technologies of the Self.” In HUTTON P., GUTMAN H. and MARTIN L. (Ed). *Technologies of the Self*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press: 16-49
- 1988b. “The Political Technology of Individuals.” In *Ibid.* 145-162
- 2003. ‘*Society Must be Defended*’: *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, Edited by M. Bertani and A. Fontana. Translated by D. Macey. New York: Picador.
- 2005. *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the College de France 1981-1982*. Edited by F. Gros. Translated by G. Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan,
- 2007. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*. Edited by M. Senellart. Translated by G. Burchell. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- 2008. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. Edited by M. Senellart. Translated by G. Burchell. Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- FRASER N. 2003. “From Discipline to Flexibilization? Rereading Foucault in the Shadow of Globalization.” *Constellations* 10 (2):160-171
- GANTT L. 1916. *Industrial Leadership: Addresses Delivered in the Page Lecture Series, 1915, before the Senior Class of the Sheffield Scientific School, Yale University*. New Haven: Yale University Press; London: H. Milford; Oxford: Oxford University Press
- GULICK L. 1937. “Science, Values and Public Administration.” In Gulick L. and Urwick L. (Ed). *Papers of the Science of Administration*. New York: Institute of Public Administration, Columbia University: 189-195
- HINDESS B. 2005. “Politics as Government: Michel Foucault’s Analysis of Political Reason.” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 30(4): 389-413

- HOPWOOD T. and MILLER P. (Ed.). 1994. *Accounting as Social and Institutional Practice*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- JACOBS C. and HERACLEOUS L. 2001. "Seeing without Being Seen': Toward an Archaeology of Controlling Science." *International Studies of Management & Organization* 31(3): 113-135
- JACQUES R. 1999. *Manufacturing the Employee: Management Knowledge from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. London: Sage
- JONES C. 2002. "Foucault's inheritance/inheriting Foucault." *Culture and Organisation* 8(3): 225-38
- KIRKMAN M. 1894. *The Science of Railways: vol. 1. Organization and Forces... with Illustrations of the Inception, Growth and Evolution of Primitive Transportation*. Chicago: World Railway Publishing
- KNIGHTS D. and WILLMOTT H. 1989. "Power and Subjectivity at Work: From Degradation to Subjugation in Social Relations." *Sociology* 23(4): 535-558
- LASCOUMES P. 2004. « La Gouvernamentalité : de la critique de l'État aux technologies du pouvoir ». *Le Portique* 13-14
- LEFLAIVE X. 1996. "Organizations as Structures of Domination." *Organization Studies* 17(1): 23-47
- LEMKE T. 2011. *Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique*. London: Paradigm
- MEYET S. and RIBEMONT T. 2005. « Les trajectoires d'un texte: "La gouvernamentalité" de Michel Foucault », in MEYET S., NAVES M.-C. and RIBEMONT T., *Travailler avec Foucault. Retours sur le politique*. Paris: L'Harmattan
- MCKINLAY A. 2006. "Managing Foucault: Genealogies of Management." *Management and Organizational History* 1(1): 87-100
- MCKINLAY A. and STARKEY K. 1998a. "Managing Foucault: Foucault, Management and Organization Theory." In MCKINLAY A. and STARKEY K. (Eds), *Foucault, Management and Organization Theory: From Panopticon to Technologies of Self*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 1-13
- 1998b. "The 'Velvety Grip': Managing Managers in the Modern Corporation." In *Ibid.* 111-125
- 1998c. "Afterword: Deconstructing Organization - Discipline and Desire." In *Ibid.* 230-241
- MCKINLAY A., CARTER C., PEZET E. and CLEGG S.. 2010. "Using Foucault to Make Strategy." *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal* 23(8): 1012-31
- MCKINLAY A., CARTER C. and PEZET E. 2012. "Governmentality, Power and Organization." *Management & Organizational History* 7: 3-15
- MCKINLAY A. and WILSON J. Forthcoming. "'All They Lose Is the Scream': Foucault, Ford and Mass Production"
- MILLER P. and O'LEARY T. 1987. "Accounting and the Construction of the Governable Person," *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 12(3): 235-265
- MILLER P. and ROSE N. 2008. *Governing the Present: Administering economic, Social and Personal Life*, Cambridge; Malden, Mass.: Polity
- MUMBY D. K. and DEETZ, S. 1990. "Power, Discourse, and the Workplace: Reclaiming the Critical Tradition." *Communication Yearbook* 13:18-47

- O'MALLEY P., WEIR L. and SHEARING C. 1997. "Governmentality, Criticism, Politics." *Economy and Society* 26(4): 501-27
- PETERS M. 2006. "Neoliberal Governmentality: Foucault on the Birth of Biopolitics." In WEBER S. and MAURER S. (Ed.). *Gouvernementalität und Erziehungswissenschaft*, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. 37-49
- PEZET E. 2004. « Discipliner et gouverner : influence de deux thèmes foucauldien en sciences de gestion ». *Finance Contrôle Stratégie* (7) 3: 169-189
- PRESTON M. 1989. "The Taxman Cometh: Some Observations on the Interrelationship Between Accounting and Inland Revenue Practice." *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 14(5-6): 389-413
- ROSE N. and MILLER P. 1992. "Political Power beyond the State: Problematics of Government." *The British Journal of Sociology* 43 (2): 173-205
- SEECK H. and KANTOLA A. 2009. "Organizational Control: Restrictive or Productive?" *Journal of Management and Organization* 15(2): 241-257
- SKÅLÉN P., FELLESON M. and FOUGÈRE M. 2006. "The Governmentality of Marketing Discourse." *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 22(4): 275-291
- STARKEY K. 2005. « Un étranger dans une contrée étrange : l'accueil réservé à Michel Foucault dans la théorie des organisations anglo-américaine ». In HATCHUEL A., PEZET E., STARKEY K. and LENAY O. (Ed.). *Gouvernement, organisation et gestion : l'héritage de Michel Foucault*. Saint-Nicolas : Presses de l'Université de Laval. 31-50
- TAYLOR F. 1912 [1903]. *Shop Management*, with an introd. by H. R. Towne, New York: Harper
- 2003 [1912]. *Taylor's Testimony before the Special House Committee to Investigate the Taylor and Other Systems of Shop Management*, reprinted in TAYLOR F., *Scientific Management*, ed. by K. Thompson, New York: Routledge. 371-661
- TOWNLEY B. 1994. *Reframing Human Resource Management: Power, Ethics and the Subject at Work*. London: Sage
- VÄLIKANGAS A. and SEECK H. 2011. "Exploring the Foucauldian Interpretation of Power and Subject in Organizations." *Journal of Management & Organization* 17(6): 812-827
- VEYNE P. 1978. "Foucault Revolutionizes History." translated by C. Porter, in DAVIDSON A. (Ed.). 2006. *Foucault and His Interlocutors*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp.146-182
- WEISKOPF R. and MUNRO I. 2011. "Management of Human Capital: Discipline, Security and Controlled Circulation in HRM." *Organization*. 1-18. Published online before print